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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/04/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) PM Hatoyama does not eliminate current Futenma relocation plan as one option

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, December 4, 2009

In connection with the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said on the morning of Dec. 4: "While the Japan-U.S. agreement is important, I have been saying that (we need to look at) whether there are other locations," admitting that he has issued orders to consider possible relocation sites other than the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City), which is the designated relocation site under the bilateral agreement. Meanwhile, he also told reporters in front of his official residential quarters: "Needless to say, the current relocation plan is still valid," stressing that he is not eliminating this as an option.

With regard to the U.S. territory of Guam, which Hatoyama is reportedly considering as a relocation site, he would only say: "I was not the one who asked to consider (Guam). It is necessary to consider whether this is suitable in terms of the deterrence (of the U.S. forces)."

The government will convey the Prime Minister's policy to the meeting of the cabinet-level working group of foreign affairs and defense officials of Japan and the U.S. to be held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in the afternoon of Dec. 4. A bureaucratic level meeting of the two governments was held at MOFA in the morning.

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However, the U.S. side is certain to react strongly to deferring a solution to next year.

In his news conference on the morning of Dec. 4, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa said "all options will be pursued." He also revealed that he will visit Guam shortly. However, with regard to the feasibility of alternative proposals, including relocation to Guam, Kitazawa said: "We are groping in the dark completely." Asked about the impact of this on the U.S. Forces Japan realignment process, which is scheduled to be completed by 2014, he said: "We may need to discuss the possibility of some changes that may occur," hinting at the possibility of delays.

With regard to the view that Futenma relocation is tied to the relocation of U.S. Marines in Okinawa to Guam, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano said: "Will everything be stalled because the Futenma plan did not work? Will it be possible not to delay the Guam relocation? These are issues that will be included in the re-examination process by Japan and the U.S.," indicating an intention to discuss these issues with the U.S. side.

(2) Fukushima to be elected for fourth term as SDP leader without a vote

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
December 4, 2009

Mizuho Fukushima, 53 (state minister for consumer affairs), leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), appeared certain to be elected for a fourth term without a vote on Dec. 3. The official filing of candidacy for the party's election is scheduled for Dec. 4. House of Representatives member Kantoku Teruya (second district of Okinawa), supported by some party members to run in the election, held a news conference at the party headquarters in the late afternoon and announced that he will not run.

Some party members have complained that Fukushima's efforts to push for the relocation of the Futenma Air Station out of Okinawa or out of Japan are not aggressive enough and have asked Teruya to run as party leader. In light of this, Fukushima told a meeting of party executives in the morning of Dec. 3 that if a decision is made to accept the existing relocation plan, "The SDP and I will have to make a grave decision," hinting at bolting from the coalition

government. Subsequently, Teruya said, "I was able to confirm the party leader's strong determination", and announced that he will not run in the election at a news conference.

The party leader's election is being held because Fukushima's term is about to expire. The new leader, who will serve for a term of two years, will be formally elected at a party convention on Jan. 23.

Mizuho Fukushima is a graduate of the Tokyo University's Faculty of Law. She was first elected to the House of Councillors in 1998. She is a lawyer and formally served as the SDP's secretary general. She is serving her second term in the Upper House and was elected on the proportional representation ticket. She is 53 years old.

(3) Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano indicates new negotiation policy on Futenma relocation

MAINICHI ONLINE (Full)

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12:37, December 4, 2009

Ai Yokota, Rumu Yamada

At a news conference on Dec. 4, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano commented on the fact that the current plan to relocate the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) to the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City) is considered to be tied to the relocation of U.S. Marines in Okinawa to Guam in one package. He said: "Is it necessary for them to be linked? Will it not be possible to separate them? We need to discuss this from different angles. Will a deadlock in one means that everything else will be invalidated?"

The 2006 Japan-U.S. agreement on U.S. Forces Japan realignment provides for the construction of a Futenma replacement facility by 2014 and the relocation of 8,000 marines to Guam in a "package." Hirano's remarks indicate a new policy of separating Futenma relocation and the relocation of marines to Guam in negotiations with the U.S.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama also discussed new relocation sites for the Futenma base on the morning of Dec. 4. With regard to Guam, which some Okinawans see as a possible relocation site, Hatoyama said: "We need to study if Guam is an appropriate relocation site." This indicates his position that if the Futenma base is moved to Guam, the question of whether the level of deterrence in defense can be maintained needs to be looked into carefully. He also said: "(The current relocation plan) is still valid."

Hatoyama made the above remarks to reporters in front of his official residential quarters.

(4) DM Kitazawa to consider Futenma relocation sites other than Henoko, to visit Guam next week

MAINICHI ONLINE (Full)
11:37, December 4, 2009

Yasushi Sengoku

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa discussed the relocation site of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) at a news conference held after the cabinet meeting on Dec. 4. He said: "Public opinion in Okinawa is strongly in favor of relocation out of the prefecture, so we will pursue all options," indicating that he will begin to consider sites other than the location designated under the current relocation plan. He also revealed that he will visit Guam next week to inspect the relocation site of the U.S. Marines in Okinawa.

Kitazawa also indicated that even if a decision based on the current plan to relocate the Futenma base to the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City) will not be made this year, he will earmark expenditures related to Futenma relocation in the FY2010 budget bill.

(5) Editorial: Conclusion to Futenma issue postponed to next year;
Prime minister must provide clear prospects

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
December 4, 2009

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The Hatoyama cabinet has decided to postpone its decision on the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) to next January or beyond. Despite the growing trend to aim at a settlement before the end of the year in line with the Japan-U.S. agreement to move Futenma to Nago's Henoko district in the prefecture, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which calls for moving Futenma out of Okinawa or even out of Japan, hinted at the possibility of leaving the ruling coalition. This led to the conclusion that the SDP's departure from the coalition could hamper the management of the administration.

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which does not hold a majority in the House of Councillors, apparently wants to prevent the SDP from dropping out of the coalition, with next year's regular Diet session approaching. But Futenma is one of the thorniest issues for the administration. The administration should not simply postpone its conclusion until next year. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama must ensure that his administration will come up with a unified opinion, and if the matter must be deferred to next year, he must provide clear prospects for a solution to it.

Prime Minister Hatoyama has pledged to relocate Futenma "at least outside Okinawa." Finding candidate sites in Okinawa other than the Henoko district is also an option. If candidate sites are studied in linkage with those options and a review of the modalities of U.S. bases in Japan, as promised in the DPJ manifesto, it will require fresh discussions with the United States and that will further delay a settlement. But such discussions did not precede the government's decision to postpone a conclusion until next year. The decision simply comes from the political circumstances under the coalition arrangement.

As was admitted by Hatoyama himself, the longer a decision is delayed, the harder it will become to resolve the issue. The Henoko relocation plan is the major campaign issue for the Nago mayoral election to be held on Jan. 24. If the DPJ Okinawa chapter-backed candidate in favor of moving Futenma outside Okinawa wins the election, chances are that the relocation issue will go back to square one. It will also be difficult for Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, who has accepted the Henoko plan, to authorize the use of the surface of public waters in defiance to popular will opposing the relocation.

Even if ways to reduce noise at other U.S. bases, including Kadena Air Base, are put in the package, the SDP is unlikely to change its stance of opposing the Henoko plan. It remains to be seen if Nakaima will stay receptive to the Henoko plan after the Upper House election next summer toward the Okinawa gubernatorial election in November.

The problem is that Prime Minister Hatoyama lacks leadership. The Prime Minister has kept avoiding presenting a clear direction by just indicating that he will make a final decision, while pointing out the sentiments of the people in Okinawa, the need to reduce the burden, and the importance of the Japan-U.S. agreement. Prime Minister Hatoyama is to blame for the turmoil of the relocation issue.

Futenma No. 2 Elementary School, which is only a fence away from Futenma Air Station, is suffering from noise of U.S. military aircraft landing at and taking off from the base. The school is

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forced to conduct an evacuation drill every spring envisaging a U.S. military plane crash on the school grounds. It is imperative and the

government's responsibility to relocate the air station from the populated residential area, to dissolve such an abnormal situation, and to ensure the safety of the residents near the base.

The abandonment of leadership by Prime Minister Hatoyama is tantamount to helping the establishment of a permanent Futenma Air Station.

(6) Hatoyama administration to pay high price for deferring Futenma relocation decision to 2010

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

Kei Sato, Koki Miura

As of Dec. 3, it became certain that a solution to the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station will be put off until next year, even though the U.S. side is demanding a solution before the end of the year. While this decision was made based on the need to maintain the coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which is strongly against reaching a conclusion before the end of the year, the Futenma issue itself has been left unresolved. The "price" to pay for deferring a decision to next year is higher than what the Kantei (Prime Minister's Official Residence) had in mind.

The Hatoyama administration was forced to make a choice between showing deference to the U.S. side, which is demanding an early solution to the Futenma issue, and accepting the position of the SDP, which is calling for relocation out of Okinawa or out of Japan. The Hatoyama administration finally decided to respect the SDP's wishes after considerable wavering. This decision is based on the judgment that "top priority needs to be given to the survival of the coalition government," according to a senior government official.

However, postponing the decision until next year will have a serious impact on the Japan-U.S. relationship, which is already showing signs of deterioration. A senior U.S. government official asks: "Is the new administration socialist?" The U.S. side has been distrustful of the Hatoyama administration from the time of its inauguration because it has been raising issues that are disagreeable to the U.S., including calling for an equal relationship with the U.S., a review of U.S. Forces Japan realignment issues, and the concept of an East Asian community excluding the United States.

The most serious problem is that Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama agreed with U.S. President Barack Obama at their summit meeting in November to settle the Futenma issue as soon as possible and even said "trust me." The U.S. essentially believes that Futenma's relocation to Henoko is an agreement between the two governments and it is a matter of course that this should be implemented.

Yet, it has waited for the Japanese side to build a consensus and has had a strong impression that a solution is forthcoming before year's end based on its faith in the Prime Minister's words. The Hatoyama administration's decision to defer the solution will be perceived as utterly arbitrary.

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Furthermore, the postponement may lead to completely scrapping the Japan-U.S. agreement on Henoko relocation due to the Nago mayoral election in January. If an opponent to Henoko relocation wins in the election, the implementation of the Japan-U.S. agreement will become even more remote. As a result, not only will relations with the U.S. be undermined, but the Futenma base will also remain where it is.

For this very reason, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, who were concerned about the impact on the bilateral relationship, had insisted on arriving at a solution before the end of the year.

A source on Japan-U.S. diplomacy says: "This is the worst possible outcome. The U.S. side is already exasperated with the Hatoyama

administration as it is. The 'Japan passing' of the 1990s may resume."

Japan and the U.S. have worked hand-in-hand on such issues as North Korea's nuclear issue and global warming prevention. If the U.S.'s trust in Japan diminishes as a result of the Futenma issue, this is certain to affect diplomacy in general.

However, there have also been favorable evaluations of the Hatoyama administration's handling of this matter without paying attention to the U.S., which is different from the previous Liberal Democratic Party administrations. One cabinet minister says: "The U.S. has no business saying this and that at a time when the survival of the administration of a country is at stake."

Nevertheless, there is no denying that by deferring the issue, the Hatoyama administration will face even more formidable challenges.

(7) Editorial: Japan must support the U.S.'s Afghan strategy

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 3, 2009

U.S. President Barack Obama has unveiled a new strategy for Afghanistan. It is intended to send about 30,000 more troops to that country on one hand and to aim at withdrawing troops starting in July 2011 on the other. The strategy specifying a certain period of time for troop deployment and the intensive injection of funds in the war is designed to speedily bring the situation under control and to expedite the efforts to hand over authority to the Afghan government.

Whether this can help end the Afghan quagmire remains to be seen. Nevertheless, if the chaotic situation in Afghanistan, a hotbed of international terrorist groups like al Qaeda, is left as is, it would pose a serious threat not only to the United States but also to the security of the world. In that sense, the U.S. administration's decision must be assessed positively for now.

"I do not make this decision lightly," the U.S. President said in his speech. When Obama was sworn in as U.S. President, there were 32,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Their number has now grown to 68,000. With the planned deployment, the number will top 100,000. An additional 30 billion dollars in defense spending will also be necessary this year.

In the United States, there is a strong call for withdrawal from Afghanistan. The President's approval rate has plummeted. Amid the

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economic downturn, the ever-growing cost of war is drawing fire. From a military strategy viewpoint, some might say that the presentation of the exit strategy of beginning withdrawing troops starting in the summer of 2011 was a mistake. It can be said that caught in the gap between security and public opinion, the President has made the difficult decision.

In mapping out the new strategy, Obama used the previous Bush administration's measures for Iraq as a reference. The administration transferred authority to Iraq after restoring security by sending additional troops for a short period of time.

In Afghanistan, there are more difficult problems than in Iraq. For instance, it is difficult to get rid of the Taliban and their sympathizers who also exist in Pakistan, Afghanistan's neighbor. Although he has been re-elected, questions remain about the governing ability of the administration of President Hamid Karzai, who is reportedly involved in irregularities and corruption.

There is no guarantee that the new U.S. strategy will succeed. Even so, eliminating international terrorism by restoring security in Afghanistan is an important task for the international community. There is no other option but to support the new U.S. strategy. In order to move closer to the exit strategy, it is also vital to urge the Karzai administration to stop irregularities and corruption and to strengthen the Afghan government's independence and the ability

to maintain security.

Japan's commitment will also be called into question. The Hatoyama administration has unveiled a civilian support package worth 5 billion dollars for Afghanistan. Japan's approach is being criticized by some as checkbook diplomacy. The government needs to consider additional aid measures -- such as the resumption of the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean which is scheduled to end next January -- that can give a boost to the new U.S. strategy.

(8) Yokota base refuses to hand over suspects in rope incident in Musashi-murayama City, Tokyo, last August

AKAHATA (Page 15) (Excerpts)
December 4, 2009

In the incident this summer in which a female motorcyclist was seriously injured from striking a rope strung across a street in Musashi-murayama City in Tokyo, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has been unable to execute the warrants of arrest for the suspects being charged with attempted murder. Akahata's investigation revealed on Dec. 3 that the Yokota base (in Fussa City) has refused to hand over the suspects, children of U.S. military personnel stationed at the base.

Two of the four suspects live on Yokota base. Under the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the permission of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) is required for making arrests and searches on U.S. military facilities and installations. The MPD has requested the handover of the suspects.

However, the suspects were not handed over by Dec. 1, the deadline of the arrest warrants.

Musashi-murayama city demanded an explanation from Yokota base on the same day, but the answer given by Christopher Watt, Yokota base

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spokesman, was: "We have not received (from the Japanese side) a formal request for the handover of custody and have not been shown any warrants of arrest. We will cooperate under the terms of SOFA if a request is received."

Musashi-murayama city also asked the MPD what is happening and tried to confirm if warrants of arrests had indeed been obtained. The reply it got was: "We cannot give you an answer."

Akahata asked Yokota base about the handover of the suspects and its public relations section gave us the following answer on Dec. 2:

"There was an informal request from the Japanese police for the handover of the suspects on Nov. 24. The base authorities responded that according to their interpretation of SOFA provisions, this could not be done. If we receive any future requests in the same manner, we will respond in the same way."

The MPD says it will renew the arrest warrants and continue to ask for the handover of the suspects. A member of the media who is knowledgeable about police affairs points out:

"The USFJ's attitude of interpreting SOFA provisions to its own advantage is unforgivable, but the Japanese side is also at fault. It is strange that the police refuse to disclose information to the local governments hosting military bases. A political decision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the National Police Agency on the execution of the arrest warrants might be behind this. This might be in consideration of the Japan-U.S. talks on the 'relocation' of the Futenma base in Okinawa."

The Tokyo Peace Committee issued a strong protest statement against the Japanese and U.S. governments on Dec. 1: "We protest with indignation the USFJ's violation of SOFA, its sheltering of criminals on a military base, and its refusal to hand over the suspects. Such incidents will always occur as long as there are military bases. The victims are being sacrificed by the Japanese government which tolerates the U.S. military bases. We demand a

drastic review of SOFA and the withdrawal of U.S. bases."

(9) Hotaru Nakama Ferschke: Japanese bride in U.S. facing difficulty obtaining permanent residency status with her husband killed in action a month after marriage

Okinawa Times (Page 35) (Almost full)
December 4, 2009

The sad news was delivered only a month after the couple submitted a notification of marriage. The husband, a U.S. Marine, of Hotaru Nakama Ferschke (26) from Ginowan Village, was killed in action in Iraq. Hotaru now lives in Tennessee, U.S.A., with the parents of her husband. She is bringing up her 11-month-old son Mikey there. However, the immigration law denies her eligibility for obtaining permanent residence status. Now she finds herself in a situation where she will have to return to Japan next spring. An increasing number of people support her. However, there are no prospects for her to be able to obtain permanent residency status.

Hotaru in March 2007 met Michael, who was stationed in Okinawa at the time, at a birthday party of their mutual friend. They then started going out. He introduced her to his family in the U.S.

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Blessed with baby

Michael gave her an engagement ring in April 2008, saying, "Let's marry, as I will return by all means." He left for Iraq two days later.

It was found a couple of week later that Hotaru was pregnant. Overjoyed with her pregnancy, Michael said, "Let's marry right now." They began the paper work to marry, though they were separated. Hotaru submitted a notification of marriage on July 10. However, Michael on August 10, a month after they submitted the notification, was fatally shot in Iraq. He was 22 years old. "That's not true. I don't believe it." Their new married life ended all of a sudden. Hotaru vomited in a toilet.

Prevention of marriage of convenience

Michael's funeral service held in the U.S. was lavish. There was a long line of mourners. Hotaru thought, "I want to raise Mikey in my husband's hometown." Since she talked about it many times with Michael, she had decided to live in the U.S. Although she was a little anxious, locals who were fond of Michael encouraged her.

However, her plan bumped into an unexpected stumbling block. The immigration law does not regard a marriage as finalized unless a couple live together. Since Hotaru and Michael were apart, they did not satisfy this requirement.

The case of Hotaru became an issue in the U.S. as well. A bill intended to exempt Hotaru from the immigration law was submitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives. However, whether the bill will pass is unknown.

Hotaru has been staying in the U.S. on a tourist visa since February this year. However, since there is no guarantee that she can live in the U.S. as a permanent resident, she cannot afford to quit her job in Japan - she is an employee of the U.S. military. She is expected to return home when her child-care leave ends in January next year. She said, "I do not give up on Mikey's account and in order to keep the promise with my husband."

ROOS